



The Labor Beacon

America—The Beacon of Hope and Opportunity

September 2004

September is Hispanic Heritage Month

Highlights in this issue:

REACH Hotline for Chinese Americans	2
Hispanic Safety and Health Summit	3
APA Federal Career Advancement Summit	4
National Urban League Receives DOL Grant	4
Secretary Chao Receives Thurgood Marshall Award	5
Native American Tribes Receive DOL Grants	5
2004 Opportunity Conference	6

Strong Economic News (August 2004 Data)

- 12 straight months of job gains
- 1.7 million new jobs created since August 2003
- The national unemployment rate has declined to 5.4% - down 0.9% from a peak of 6.3% in June 2003 and the lowest rate since October 2001
- The 5.4% unemployment rate is below the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s
- Minority homeownership set a new record of 51% in the second quarter of 2004.

Strong Enforcement Of Labor Laws Continues To Benefit Minority Communities



As the first American woman of Asian descent to be in a President's Cabinet, Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao, who immigrated to America as a child, has always stated her commitment to helping immigrants realize the American Dream.

Under her leadership, the Department of Labor has made significant contributions to the advancement of the minority community through its human capital program, enforcement priorities, compliance assis-

tance efforts and partnership activities.

Strong Enforcement

DOL's tough, targeted enforcement policy has yielded record-breaking results for America's workers. They are safer and are receiving more back wages — including overtime pay — than ever before.

The result of these efforts is enhanced worker protection. For example, in 2002, the number of workplace fatalities fell by 6.6% and the rate of fatal injuries in the workplace fell from 4.3 to 4.0 per 100,000 workers, **both of which are the**

lowest figures ever recorded. Fatal work injuries among Hispanic workers, which had been rising every year since 1995, were down by 6% in 2002. This improvement resulted from better enforcement, compliance assistance and an emphasis on accountability and results.

Fighting discrimination in low-wage industries

Last year, the Department of Labor's direct enforcement efforts in low-wage industries, such as garment manufacturing, health care, janitorial services, restaurants and the hotel industries, yielded \$39,595,382 in back wages for workers.

(Continued on page 2)

Joint Agreement To Improve Working Conditions For Hispanic Workers

U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao and Mexican Secretary for Foreign Affairs Luis Ernesto Derbez signed a Joint Declaration on July 21 that reaffirms the shared commitment of the United States

and Mexico to improve compliance with and awareness of workplace laws and regulations protecting Mexican workers in the United States.

“Hispanics are an integral
(Continued on page 2)



U.S. Labor Sec. Chao and Mexican Foreign Affairs Sec. Derbez sign a Joint Declaration. (DOL Photo)

...Strong Enforcement Benefits Minority Communities

(Continued from page 1)

Over 80,000 workers in these industries received back wages. Targeted enforcement focused on industries with immigrant workers who are often more willing to accept low-wages and less likely to complain to the government when their rights have been violated.

In February 2003, eleven Chicago area Chinese-style buffet restaurants agreed to pay over \$665,000 to more than 100 workers employed as busboys and kitchen help. The workers, mostly Asian and Hispanic, clocked as many as 66 hours a week and were not paid overtime. In some instances, employees were paid less than minimum wage.

In another case, Department of Labor legal action enabled the distribution of more than \$1.2 million in unpaid wages to nearly 250 Asian Pacific American garment workers employed in Northern California.

In February 2003 as a result of a Department of Labor investigation, Kilsoo Lee, owner of a garment factory in American Samoa, was found guilty of 14 criminal counts including involuntary servitude, forced labor, extortion, money laundering and conspiracy to violate the rights of more than 200 Vietnamese and Chinese immigrant workers who operated his factory.

Enforcing EO 11246

Executive Order 11246 tasks the Labor Department specifically with enforcing

nondiscrimination in employment by government contractors and subcontractors. Generally, workplace discrimination issues are addressed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

In Fiscal Year 2003, the Department of Labor obtained settlements that provided \$26,220,356 in financial remedies to a record 14,361 minority and female workers.

In fiscal year 2003, DOL conducted 24% more Glass Ceiling Reviews than the previous fiscal year—the most in the history of the Glass Ceiling Audit Program. During these audits, DOL assessed whether there were barriers within the corporation that would prevent advancement by women and minorities.

New Labor Hotline Helps Chinese Americans

The Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division has established a Chinese language hotline in New York City for workers with questions about their pay. The hotline project is known as **REACH (Rapid Employee Assistance in Chinese Hotline)**.

Chinese-speaking Wage and Hour staff answers the help number (212-264-4175) Monday through Friday. During non-business hours, a recording instructs callers to leave a message in

Cantonese, Mandarin, or Fujianese. A Chinese-speaking investigator then promptly responds to provide assistance.

In addition to the hotline, 39 employment agencies serving the Chinese com-

**REACH Hotline
(212) 264-4175**

munity in New York City have agreed to provide job seekers with information regarding their rights under the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA) in Chinese. A new Chinese language Wage and Hour poster explaining the FLSA minimum wage and overtime provisions along with the REACH hotline is being displayed in these agencies. The poster is also being distributed to garment contractors who employ many Chinese-speaking workers. For more information, log on to www.wagehour.dol.gov.

...Agreement Signed With Mexican Government

(Continued from page 1)

part of the American workforce... This administration is committed to ensuring that they are safe on the job and fully and fairly compensated for their work," said Secretary Chao. These agreements build on the Department's unprecedented joint outreach pro-

gram with the Mexican Embassy and its consulates in the United States.

Consistent with the Joint Declaration, two Letters of Agreement were also signed, which highlight specific efforts to be undertaken jointly between the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the

Mexican Embassy and the 45 Consulates in the United States. These specific initiatives build on existing joint efforts.

Mexican Ambassador to the United States, Carlos de Icaza, also participated in the signing ceremony.

DOL Holds Summit on Hispanic Safety and Health

On July 22, Secretary Chao hosted the first-ever Hispanic Safety and Health Summit where she told participants that the Administration is committed to further driving down workplace fatalities among Hispanics, which in 2002 dropped for the first time in seven years.

“Since 2002, there has been a consistent decrease in all workplace fatalities. I am proud of the fact that for the first time in seven years, workplace fatalities among Hispanic workers declined

in 2002,” Secretary Chao said.

The Hispanic Safety and Health Summit brought together representatives from government, community and faith-based organizations, non-profits, industry, academia and organized labor to share practical safety and health information and success stories and discuss ways to improve communication, training and outreach for Hispanic workers in the United States.

The 17.5 million Hispanic workers in

the U.S. play vital roles in virtually every American industry. Workplace fatalities for all workers are at historic lows, decreasing by more than half in the past 30 years.

Secretary Chao said, “This summit demonstrates the commitment of this Administration and the Department of Labor to protecting the health and safety of our nation’s diverse Hispanic workforce.”

Hispanic workers and employers can find more information on safety and health at: http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/compliance_assistance/index_hispanic.html.



Secretary Chao Visits Korean Church

Secretary Chao addressed the congregation of Younknak Church in Los Angeles, California on May 5 and spoke about the Administration’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative and how Korean-American churches can help workers prepare for opportunities in the 21st century workforce. She also thanked the Korean-American com-

munity for its contributions to the nation’s economic vitality and security. The church’s senior pastor, Rev. Hyung-Cheon Rim, introduced Secretary Chao.

Secretary Chao stated, “This administration recognizes that places of worship and religious organizations can play a valuable role in helping others prepare for the future and

reach their full potential. [I know] that faith-based organizations have the power to reach some of the most vulnerable in our society. That’s why the Department of Labor has awarded over \$42.5 million in grants to faith-based and community organizations, including Korean-American faith-based organizations that reach out to immigrants who need help.”

Esperanza USA Receives \$2.76 Million Grant

On July 22, Secretary Chao announced a \$2.76 million grant to provide education and training services to Hispanic youth already involved with the criminal justice system or at-risk of involvement. The funds will serve 600 youth, 120 in each of five locations—Orlando, Miami, Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia.

Esperanza USA will use the grant to build a network of faith-based and community organizations, the local public workforce investment system, the juvenile justice system and the business community to ensure that targeted Hispanic youth receive education, workforce development and supportive services that lead to productive lives.



Secretary Chao announces a \$2.76 million grant to Esperanza USA. (DOL Photo)

APA Federal Career Advancement Summit

Secretary Chao hosted the third annual Asian Pacific American (APA) Federal Career Advancement Summit on May 10, 2004.

“May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, a time to

recognize and celebrate the many accomplishments and contributions of Asian Pacific Americans to our country. ... This Summit with its many interactive workshops, mentoring sessions, and panel discussions is meant to reach out and help



Asian Pacific Americans gain additional skills to advance to leadership positions within the federal government,” said Secretary Chao.

The Summit seeks to increase diversity in senior positions of the federal workforce.

Asian Pacific Americans comprise 4.8% of the total federal workforce and 3.2% of management positions. The current Administration has appointed more APAs to positions than any other Administration in history—two of these APAs are Cabinet Secretaries

and over 206 APAs serve in senior-level positions in this Administration. Secretary Chao is the first Asian American woman to serve as a Cabinet Secretary. With 20 APAs, the Labor Department has a record number of Asian Pacific Americans who are serving or have served in the noncareer senior ranks of the Department.

At this year’s Summit, Secretary Chao also unveiled a new APA Federal Career Guide to assist APAs interested in pursuing a rewarding career in the federal government. To download a copy, please visit www.dol.gov/dol/jobs/apa_fcg.pdf.

Las Mujeres y El Dinero (Women and Money)

Hispanic women face unique challenges when it comes to financial security. According to recent findings, they generally do not have full knowledge about savings and retirement to make informed decisions about their future financial health. As a result, they are more likely to rely on Social Security, their children, and family for retirement and not plan for the future.

To address this issue, the Department of Labor launched a program called Las Mujeres y el Dinero (Women and Money). During 2004, the Department of Labor is sponsoring a series of ten financial education conferences across the country for Hispanic women.

“‘Las Mujeres y el Dinero’ (Women and Money) was designed to em-

power Latinas to learn more about financial security and their role in planning for their own financial futures,” said Women’s Bureau Director Shinae Chun. “We, as working women, should know all there is to know about taking care of ourselves.”

For more information, log onto www.dol.gov/wb/hisp.htm.

National Urban League Receives \$9.2 Million Grant

On July 23, Secretary Chao announced a \$9.2 million grant to the National Urban League to assist inner-city African American youth. Through the grant, the National Urban League will bring the Youth Career Preparation Program to 15 urban sites across the country. At the sites, 1,200 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 will be involved

in internships and on-the-job training to help them prepare for full-time jobs in the private sector. The pilot demonstration will bring together the federal workforce investment system and its local One-Stop Career Centers, state and local government, business, education and faith-based and community-based organizations to ensure the success and continuation of the project.



Secretary Chao and National Urban League officials announce new grant to assist at-risk youth. (DOL Photo)

Secretary Chao Receives Thurgood Marshall Award

The Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund recently honored Secretary Chao for her support of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The award was presented during the organization's 2004 Community Leadership dinner.

"Education is critical to accessing opportunity," said Secretary Chao. "Eighty percent of all new jobs require some kind of postsecondary education or training, and college graduates



earn twice as much over their lifetimes as workers who stopped with a high school diploma. We must all ensure that the promise of equal opportunity remains a reality for every generation."

The Community Leadership Award is presented to an individual or organization whose work and support to the mission of public Historically Black Colleges and Universities has raised the profile and national understanding of their role in educating America's future leaders. The

award is presented annually on behalf of the 45 member schools.

The Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund was established in 1987 to carry on former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall's legacy of equal access to higher education through support of exceptional merit scholars attending America's HBCUs. Marshall successfully argued the 1954 landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* before the U.S. Supreme Court, which resulted in the desegregation of public schools.

Native American Tribes Receive \$6.3 Million In Grants

Secretary Chao recently announced a \$3.2 million grant to the Pueblo of Laguna Tribe in New Mexico and a \$3.1 million grant to the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe in South Dakota to provide employment and training services to Native American youth who are at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system or are ex-offenders.

These grants are part of the \$54.6 million Department of Labor *Youth Offender Demonstration Project*. The grants support projects involving faith-based and community organizations that can best reach youth who are currently involved with the court system or at risk of involvement. The goal of these grants is to connect this segment of the community with job training programs and employment opportunities.



Sec. Chao announces grant with members of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe in South Dakota. (DOL Photo)

Secretary Chao Meets With Korean Employers

On May 5, Secretary Chao met with leaders from the Korean American business community in Garden Grove, California, to recognize their contributions to California and the nation's economic vitality and security.



Secretary Chao meets with Korean employers in California. (DOL Photo)

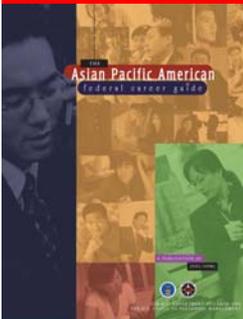
"Overcoming adversities, obstacles and even tragedies, the Korean-American community has created one of the most vibrant entrepreneurial com-

munities in America," said Secretary Chao. "Three out of 10 Korean Americans own their own business, a very high rate for any community. Since most jobs are created by small business employers, that means that Korean Americans are helping to create jobs and contributing to the economic vitality of our economy."



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
OFFICE OF PUBLIC LIAISON**

Suite S2018, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210
Phone: 202-693-6000
Fax: 202-693-6145



**APA Federal Career
Advancement Guide**

If you are interested in pursuing a rewarding career in the federal government, download your free copy at:

www.dol.gov/dol/jobs/apa_fcg.pdf



Tuesday, October 12, 2004

Omni Shoreham Hotel
2500 Calvert Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Obtain more information and
Register for this FREE conference at

www.opportunityconference.gov

DOL Hosts 2nd Opportunity Conference

On October 12, the Department of Labor will host the 2004 Opportunity Conference, the second annual conference focused on strengthening the economic development of the Asian Pacific and Hispanic American communities, the two fastest growing segments of the 21st century workforce. The conference is designed for workers, small business owners, non-profit organizations and community leaders.

In last year's keynote speech, Secretary Chao remarked, "Together, Asian Pacific and Hispanic Americans make up the fastest growing share of entrepreneurs in our country, opening record numbers of small and medium-size businesses, creating new jobs and generating billions in revenues every year. We all have a tremendous stake in ensuring that the

Hispanic and Asian Pacific communities are vibrant, prosperous and become even more integral to the U.S. workforce."

The conference emphasizes key components of economic development including job training and understanding government procurement opportunities. Scheduled workshop topics include small business development, accessing capital, doing

business with the government, opportunities for faith-based and community organizations, and assistance to limited English proficiency workers.

As with other small and medium-size minority business operations, Asian Pacific and Hispanic entrepreneurs face particular challenges to growth, long-term viability and financial health.

National co-sponsors include the U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.



Secretary Chao addressed the first-ever Opportunity Conference in 2003. (DOL Photo)

The next Opportunity Conference will be held on October 12, 2004 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. For more information or to register for this free conference, please visit:
www.opportunityconference.gov